

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 DHA-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 /070 W

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O P 142100Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1181

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 5788

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC PINT PFOR EC

SUBJ: US CATHOLIC BISHOPS DEPART ECUADOR

REF: QUITO 1177

THREE OF THE FOUR U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS AND THE ONE CATHOLIC CLERGYMAN WHO WERE PART OF THE DETAINED PARTICIPANTS IN THE RIOBAMBA CONFERENCE DEPARTED ECUADOR THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 14. ARCHBISOP ROBERTO SANCHEZ OF NEW MEXICO AND BISHOP PATRICIO FLORES DEPARTED ON ECUATORIANA FLIGHT 726 TO MIAMI FROM WHERE THEY WILL SEEK CONNECTIONS TO THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMES. BISHOP GILBERT CHAVEZ OF SAN DIAGO AND RVM PAUL SEVILLO FOR WASHINGTON DC.C. DEPARTED ON AN AVIANCA FLIGHT FOR BOGOTA WHERE THEY PLAN TO SPEND SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE PROCEEDING ONWARD TO THE U.S. BISHOP JUAN ARZUBE OF LOS ANGELES PLANS TO REMAIN IN ECUADOR TO VISIT FAMILY IN GUAYAQUIL.

2. ALL THE REMAINING DETAINEES WERE RELEASED UNCONDITIONALLY BY THE POLICE THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 13, THE U.S. CITIZENS AND A NUMBER OF THE OTHER FOREIGNERS SPEND THE NIGHT IN A LOCAL CATHOLIC RETREAT HOME.

3. AMBASSADOR AND DCM MET WITH THE FIVE U.S. PARTICIPANTS THE
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MORNING OF AUGUST 14 AND ALSO ACCOMPANIED THEM TO THE AIRPORT FOR

THEIR DEPARTURE. THEY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE EFFORTS OF THE EMBASSY ON THEIR BEHALF. THEY REPEATED WHAT THEY HAD TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS DURING THEIR DETENTION, NAMELY THAT THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE RIOBAMBA MEETING WERE NOT BE CONSIDERED SUBVERSIVE, THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO EFFORTS TO HIDE THE MEETING, AND THAT THE ACTION OF THE GOE WAS TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED. THEY ASSERTED, CONTRARY TO THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT, THAT THE LOCAL CURIA HAD BEEN NOTIFIED OF THE MEETING SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. THEY CONFIRMED THAT THE POLICE BROKE UP THE MEETING IN A MOST THREATENING MANNER, BRANDDISHING PISTOLS, SUBMACHINE GUNS, AND TEAR GAS GRENADES, REFUSING TO LET ANYONE COLLECT HIS BELONGINGS, OR DOCUMENTS BEFORE BEING HEARDED INTO THE BUS, AND MAKING NO EFFORT TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS POLICE OFFICERS. UPON ARRIVAL AT THE QUITO BARRACKS, THE BUS WAS SURROUNDED WITH ARMED SOLDIERS AND POLICE DOGS. THEY DID SAY THAT AFTER THEY ENTERED THE BARRACKS THEY WERE WELL-TREATED. HOWEVER, NO GOE OFFICAL INTERVIEWED THEM DURING THEIR DETENTION OR INFORMED THEM OF WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THEM UNTIL THEY WERE RELEASED LAST NIGHT.

4. THE PAPAL NUNCIO AND THE ARCHBISHOP OF QUITO SPEND MOST OF AUGUST 13 IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND OBTAINED CONSENT TO THEIR UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE AT ABOUT 7:00 P.M. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO SPOKE TO THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT SEVERAL TIMES ON THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 13 TO URGE THAT THE U.S. DETAINEES BE ALLOWED THEIR FREEDOM PENDING THEIR DEPARTURE FOR THE COUNTRY.

5. THE GROUP HAS DRAFTED A STATEMENT FOR RELEAST TO THE PRESS UPON THEIR ARRIVAL IN THE U.S. (REPORTED BY SEPTTEL). IT'S QUITE MODERATE CONSIDERING WHAT THOSE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN THROUGH. AS ARCHBISHOP SANCHEZ EXPLAINED TO THE AMBASSADOR, THE PURPOSE OF THE STATEMENT IS TO CLEAR THEIR NAMES IN THE US. AND PARTICULARLY IN THEIR OWN DIOCESES, FROM ANY IMPLICATION THAT THEY HAD DONE SOMETHING WRONG.

6. CONSIDERING THE MANNER IN WHICH THESE U.S. CITIZENS WERE DETAINED, THE EMBASSY IS CONSIDERING WHETHER TO RECOMMENED TO THE DEPARTMENT THAT AN OFFICIAL PROTEST BE LODGED WITH THE GOE.

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